

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION EA-06

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FM AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5704

INFO AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

S E C R E T SINGAPORE 3258

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR

SUBJ: POSSIBLE VISIT OF SECRETARY KISSINGER

REF: SINGAPORE 3232

1. DURING SAME DINNER ON JULY 2 IN WHICH HE COMMENTED ON FORTH-COMING VIETNAMESE MISSION TO SINGAPORE (SEE SEPTTEL) FOREIGN MINISTER RAJARATNAM MADE A STRONG PERSONAL PITCH FOR THE SECRETARY TO PROCEED WITH HIS PLANS TO VISIT SINGAPORE AND POSSIBLY OTHER ASEAN COUNTRIES IN AUGUST. HE MADE THIS APPROACH FOLLOWING EXTENDED DISCUSSION OF HIS RECENT SPEECH IN BANGKOK IN WHICH HE HAD URGED A MULTI-POWER PRESENCE IN THE ASEAN REGION AS THE BEST MEANS OF ENSURING ITS SECURITY (SEE REFTTEL). RAJARATNAM SAID HE HAD POINTED OUT TO HIS COLLEAGUES IN MANILA THAT THE SOVIETS USED SUBVERSIVE MEANS TO PROMOTE THEIR INFLUENCE IN THE REGION. IF ASKED TO WITHDRAW FROM THE REGION, THEY COULD CORRECTLY SAY THEY HAD NO MILITARY BASES IN SOUTHEAST ASIA. BUT THEY COULD STILL BUILD UP THEIR INFLUENCE IN THE ASEA THROUGH VIETNAM AND THROUGH SUBVERSION. THEREFORE, RAJARATNAM SAID HE HAD ARGUED THAT SINCE THE U.S. DID NOT USE SUBVERSIVE METHODS, IT WAS IMPORTANT THAT ITS ECONOMIC INVESTMENT HAVE

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THE FIRM UNDERPINNING OF A MILITARY PRESENCE IN THE REGION.

2. AT THIS POINT RAJARATNAM TURNED TO ME AND SAID HE HAD SEEN A PRESS REPORT THAT THE SECRETARY MIGHT NOT BE VISITING THE AREA IN AUGUST AS HAD BEEN CONTEMPLATED EARLIER. HE FELT IT WAS IMPORTANT AT THIS STATE OF THE SEA POWER GAME THAT THE SECRETARY SPEND 10 DAYS IN THE REGION (INCLUDING SINGAPORE) TO SHOW THAT THE U.S. IS STILL INTERESTED IN THE PRESERVATION OF A NON-COMMUNIST SOUTHEAST ASIA. I POINTED OUT THAT OUR CARRIER TASK FORCE LED BY THE RANGER WAS CURRENTLY IN PORT, AND THAT SURELY THIS CONSTITUTED A VISIBLE MANIFESTATION OF U.S. PRESENCE. RAJARATNAM REPLIED THAT A VISIT BY KISSINGER WAS WORTH MUCH MORE THAN A VISIT BY THE RANGER AND WOULD DRAW MUCH MORE ATTENTION. IT WOULD ALSO SERVE TO BALANCE THE GROWING SOVIET PRESENCE IN SOUTH AND SOUTHEAST ASIA AND ENCOURAGE THE ASEAN COUNTRIES TO RESIST PRESSURES FROM NORTH VIETNAM.

COMMENT: AS WE INDICATED IN OUR REPORT OF RAJARATNAM'S SPEECH IN BANGKOK, THE GOS IS WORRIED ABOUT THE CONSTANCY OF U.S. PURPOSE AND PRESENCE IN SOUTH AND SOUTHEAST ASIA AND THAT U.S. STRATEGIC THINKING APPEARS TO BE FOCUSED ON AN ISLAND DEFENSE SYSTEM WITH MAINLAND ASIA EXCLUDED. RAJARATNAM IS OBVIOUSLY WORRIED THAT UNLESS THE U.S. MAKES THE NECESSARY WAVES TO SHOW ITS DETERMINATION TO MAINTAIN AN ACTIVE PRESERVE IN THE REGION SOME OF THE ASEAN GOVERNMENTS MAY WILT UNDER A STRONG VIETNAMESE DIPLOMATIC OFFENSIVE. FROM THIS VANTAGE POINT, A VISIT TO SINGAPORE WOULD CERTAINLY BE A NET PLUS IN U.S.-SINGAPORE RELATIONS. IT WOULD SERVE TO REINFORCE THE ASSURANCES GIVEN TO SINGAPORE LEADERSHIP BY THE VICE PRESIDENT AND SECRETARY BUTZ. DEPARTMENT WILL OF COURSE WISH TO WEIGH THE RELATIVE PROS AND CONS, BUT SHOULD RECOGNIZE THAT IF IT TAKES PLACE GOS WILL MAKE THE MOST OF IT. RAJARATNAM HAVING GONE OUT ON A LIMB REGARDING THE DESIRABILITY OF A U.S. PRESENCE, WE CAN BE SURE THAT A VISIT BY THE SECRETARY WOULD BE GIVEN HEAVY GOS PLAY TO DEMONSTRATE THAT THIS PRESENCE DOES IN FACT EXIST. HOLDRIDGE

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NNN

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